

A
REVIEW
OF 2,
SOME THINGS PERTAINING
TO
CIVIL GOVERNMENT.

By JOHN MARTIN.

*As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same
one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace
of God.*

1 PET. IV. 10.

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A REVIEW, &c.

IF secular government is more or less the proper concern of all men, no apology will be required for a Review of some things relative to that interesting subject. But whether we are born to rule, or to live and die without the least degree of civil dominion, that any man should be without knowledge is not good. I will therefore form no excuse for being thus employed.

But, excellent as knowledge is, that men advance slowly to real understanding; that in their progress from mental weakness to intellectual strength they are liable to form wrong conclusions; that when most improved they know but in part; that though so frail and apt to err they are ambitious as they are weak, and as

earnest to start into consequence as they are unable to support what they covet to possess; the history of all ages, and of all countries, induces us to believe: a recollection of those trials which we ourselves have made to gain intelligence, with a due regard to the gradual attainments of other people, confirm us in this belief; and the BIBLE sets before us such strong evidences of the same facts, that to call them in question would be to reproach our own judgment.

If men, in this present evil world, are all of them so contaminated, and enfeebled by the fall, as to be in a kind of *preternatural* state, and not “ as if posterity had been continued by *creation*, “ instead of *generation*,” if, with every just exception, what has been asserted of mankind is generally true; if to some things which have been said, no exceptions can be made; with what caution should every man endeavour to think and speak on a subject so complicated, of such extent and influence as that which is now before us.

The

The *nature* of civil government will always, in some measure, correspond with those principles on which it is built. According to some, "men are all of *one degree*, and consequently—all men are "born equal." But in the belief of many better authors, we are all of us, born more or less dependent, unequal, and, in our own order, members of that civil society to which we belong. The ground of this belief will bear the most rigorous investigation; provided they who examine it allow the authenticity of the sacred writings.

But "civil government," it is said, "is altogether an affair of the present state, and is no more than a provision of human skill designed to ensure freedom and tranquility during our continuance on this temporary stage of existence." If this be true, how is *conscience* touched with such government, or why is an *oath* exacted to support this skilful contrivance?

It has often been asked, Which is the best *kind* of civil government? But perhaps,

haps, this question is not so important as many are willing to suppose, and eager to assert. For, all government to which men submit, must be judged of, not abstractedly, but by a proper attention to the period in which it exists, the country where it prevails, the authority by which it is supported, the antiquity of its establishment, the improvements, or the injuries, it has received, and by the present temper and circumstances of the people who are actually subject to such dominion.

The question seems more difficult to be answered when we consider, that every form of government may be abused; has been already mismanaged, and will be again misimproved. From such evils we can have no security, while depravity continues to be connected with all the dignity of human nature. Political arrangements, however varied, cannot be perfect. Such perfection is never promised by able Statesmen, nor is it ever thought of by sober people.

Where

Where government of any kind is once established and regarded, some must rule, and others must submit. But if they who rule are *bad* men, whatsoever they are called, Kings or Consuls, Tribunes or members of a National Assembly, they will always be a burden to their *bettors*.—Satan when transformed into an angel of light, is as much our adversary as when he assumes any other mode of opposition.

The notion of being governed by law as it lies in books, or rests on common belief, without the learning and interposition of living legislators, is a strange mistake. For what *is* law, may be the subject of long debate; therefore, not only proper judges must be appointed in every civil, and in every criminal cause, but the law of every country must be enlarged or corrected as legislators are pleased to determine; must be suspended or mitigated as they find it expedient; must be put in force as the supreme power in every state directs; and the right of pardoning those who are condemned to die, must, of necessity, be lodged in the same hands.

When

When civil government, in any situation, is once settled, innovation, though not always dangerous, is generally to be suspected; because, whatever is introduced which is entirely *new*, if it is hurtful upon the *whole*, can be of no real advantage to the State. But what that is which will prove a national benefit, the reasoning powers, the slight, and the stronger prejudices of the people deliberately considered, few have talents to determine, and fewer still are thoroughly willing to promote.

It cannot be the business of any *individual* to form a new system of government for this country; nor is it decent for any man to say, that “no such thing as a constitution exists.” But it is the duty of every man, as a subject of the British Empire, to consider under what laws he lives, and in what manner he may so act, as not to be afraid of the Power, but enjoy the legal protection, and if possible, the conscientious praise, of the same. —If he is a professor of godliness, he is under

under additional obligations to be attentive to such behaviour.

We can none of us pretend to doubt, whether that form of government which, upon mature trial, has long been preferred in this Island, and is still preferred by a great majority of its inhabitants, is of that kind which is commonly called MONARCHICAL. It is equally clear, that this mode of government has not only been settled amongst us time immemorial, and is now, in the opinion of many, much improved; but in what is called its corrected state, it has been the boast of Britons, and the admiration and envy of foreign courts. At home the question has been asked, “ Was not the present monarchical government, in its full extent, authorized by lawyers, recommended by divines, acknowledged by politicians, acquiesced in, nay passionately cherished, by the *people* in general; and all this during a period of at least a hundred and sixty years; and, till of late, without the smallest murmur or controversy?”

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What

What foreigners have thought of our civil polity need not be told.

Of the nature, extent, and comparative excellence of our constitution and laws, written and unwritten; of the wisdom, moderation, and indulgence of our civil governors, now, or at any former period; or of any thing defective in their administration; we can form no judgment, but by the common channels of information. We were born, as well as those who were born before us, independent of our own choice; at a time and place, of those parents, in those circumstances, and with such capacities, as the Lord of life appointed. In our childhood, we were insensibly led into those connections, and began to form those habits, that were predominant in our youth; and which, we have reason to believe, will not tamely submit to be controlled at the latter end of our course. We may therefore conclude, that all men are, in some respects, alike, and in others, very different: alike, in their common nature, and manner of
entrance

entrance into this world; and very different, in their civil connections, and intellectual endowments; not by their predirection, but by the providence of God.

In what manner this country was governed when it was invaded by Julius Cæsar, conquered by William I. or relieved by William III. who knows, or can know, but by the medium of History, and by verbal Tradition? It is by weighing, in the best scales we have, the worth of such reports, that we arrive at some degree of useful understanding. In what manner it was governed when we were children, we cannot tell, but by the same methods of instruction; and by the same operation of our mental powers. In what manner it is now governed, is still more difficult for any man to say, than how it was ruled in the splendid reign of Elizabeth; because, events when finished, if they are faithfully recorded, are like wheels worn out and thrown aside; on which we may look as long as we please, without being disturbed with the rapidity of their motion: but events yet in move-

ment, are like wheels in circulation ; whither they will next be turned, when, or why, they will cease to move, we may conjecture, but we cannot ascertain.

In what manner Great Britain will be governed when we are dead, let no man venture to predict. The revolutions abroad, we have lived to see, and the alarms at home, some of us have lived to feel, should guard us against the dream of uninterrupted rest ; and against the thought of being supine in any civil situation. On the other hand, the extravagance of the discontented, in the year 1780, and their imprudence in the present year ; the boast of a very active person among them, of having laid a train of arguments which was to make the mighty tremble ; and his own blindness to a train of awful events, which, alas ! he could neither foresee nor avoid ; these things, the inconsiderable number of the unquiet, and their want of agreement amongst themselves ; should arm us against dejection, and encourage us to hope, that there will not only be peace and truth in our days, but in ages yet to come,

Since

Since then, no man has, or can have, more knowledge of the past, or of the present state of this country, or any other, than his means of information, his leisure, capacity, and diligence will admit; tried by such criterions, it would be as arrogant for the bulk of mankind to imagine, that their judgment of the *means* by which legislation should be conducted is profound, as it would be unguarded in any sensible man to assert, that such knowledge is beneath his notice; or that, in his *own* station, it is not desirable to have a competent share of political understanding.

A Gentleman who is said, by some, to have profited in the science of government, above many of his equals in his own nation; being more exceedingly zealous for what is *now* called the liberties of the people; this Gentleman, we are told, "has been pleasantly ridiculed by his friends as being an Unitarian in religion, and a Trinitarian in politics." Of this rapid writer, it is published to augment his praise, that "he has delineated

“ delineated the British *constitution* with
 “ great accuracy, and has expressed his
 “ warm admiration of *it* as the best sys-
 “ tem of policy the sagacity of man has
 “ been able to contrive.” Now, though
 I do not believe he has delineated the
 British constitution with *great accuracy*,
 nor am I yet convinced, that “ his
 “ enlightened and active mind, his un-
 “ wearied assiduity, and the extent of
 “ his researches,” have poured *such* light
 into almost every department of science,
as will be the admiration of *every* fu-
 ture period; yet, if the British con-
 stitution is the *best* system of policy the
 sagacity of man has been able to contrive,
 how is it, that one of the most turbulent
 advocates for what he is pleased to call,
 “ THE RIGHTS OF MAN;” how is it
 that this “ SECRETARY FOR FOREIGN
 AFFAIRS,” should dare to assert, we are
 yet *without a constitution?*

If the three Estates of this kingdom,
 who are as well acquainted with our civil
 constitution as other people, were at
 such variance, that it would be difficult
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for men of sense to determine, which of them it was right, or safe to regard, we should be in a perilous situation. But while they are so united, that freedom of debate is allowed, and public business is suffered to take its regular course, their decisions, on civil subjects, must be final.

But some are never contented with that authority from which there is no appeal. Even in the regular rotation of business, they are for carrying their complaints to the people, if the vote of parliament, with the assent of the crown, does not meet with their private approbation. Whom however, do they call the *people*? All the inhabitants of this country, without exception? A majority of the whole number? Or the most worthy?—If they would complain to every individual, the expedient is as impracticable as it is ridiculous. If to the majority of the nation, who is to take the poll? and when is civil business to be dispatched? If to the most worthy amongst us, who is to judge of their excellence? Themselves?
Or

Or those who are least able to estimate their moral and political virtues?

On every side here is a poor prospect of being relieved by the *majesty* of the people. But that subjects in this country, have a right to state a supposed grievance to their representatives, to petition for redress, to argue and remonstrate as the nature of their case may demand, is incontestable. Yet if that assembly to which they look up for assistance is not allowed to judge for themselves, what becomes of the right of private judgment? A right which loses all its charms when they who petition are not allowed to dictate, is a notion too absurd for formal refutation.

Some who scorn to petition are sufficiently fond of their own inventions. But if any man conceives he has formed a political plan which promises general utility, his plan, whatever it may be, was once to himself unknown. What he fancies he has invented, might have been first thought of by another; by a person in a very different situation to himself; by one who has been wont to treat him,

and

and his particular connections, with strong marks of party resentment. Had it so happened, is he sure he should have heard of the same scheme with pleasure; and have recommended the offspring of his supposed adversary to public notice without a moment's hesitation?

Let us reverse the supposition, and be allowed to imagine, that our projector has acted, or has been thought to act, against men in power, as we have conceived it possible, that some formidable antagonist might have acted towards him? Can he affect to question whether his opponents have the common right of private judgment? Upon his own principles, can he doubt whether they are at liberty to receive or reject his propositions, entirely, or in part, just as it may appear to them, they either do, or do not deserve their serious attention? Are we never to be thought a free people, till our Senators are fettered by every private conceit? Whatever some may think, I will venture to assert, that our freedom in this country, is not only as great as in any other well

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regulated

regulated kingdom; but is perhaps, as great as reason, in her unruffled moments, can demand.

If any man, by the prudent use of his liberty, (and what is liberty where prudence is wanting?) could transmit those opinions to men in authority, which they might think it their wisdom to adopt, this action would give them pleasure, and be to himself an honor. If, unable to impart such notions, he wishes his superiors to countenance any change they cannot believe is either wise or safe, he wishes them to do that which probably, he himself disdains; and should he indulge such a temper, he would soon compel them to do it, were his power equal to his ambition. So easy it is to slide into a persecuting spirit; and so difficult to avoid those things ourselves, which we are always ready to condemn in other people. We may talk earnestly against *popery*; but he that is not, in any respect, of a popish disposition, is uncommonly indebted to the grace of God.

But

But it will be said, that prejudice, passion, the love of money, and an insatiable thirst for dominion, prevent those who complain from being heard with due attention. Were this the fact, they who urge such objections against men in administration, should consider, whether the same vices may not be found in their own bosoms; whether those evil tempers would be diminished by the greatest torrent of temporal gain, or by the largest acquisition of secular power; whether, by being advanced to places in which a criminal conformity to this world would be almost inevitable, and the charm of a good conscience extremely difficult to be enjoyed, they would acquire a real advantage; or whether it is possible to prove, that men who indulge inordinate desires for such elevation, are more renewed in the spirit of their mind, or more to be trusted, than other people.

It is again objected, that no man is to be deprived of his right for fear he should abuse it. True, he is not; yet let me ask, Is it right, that this country should

be governed by the three Estates of the kingdom legally assembled? Is it right, that they who govern should judge for themselves what is constitutional, on every question of national importance? If this is not right, in what other way would the discontented govern were they permitted to bear rule? Names might be changed, but things would continue as they are; forms might be new fashioned, but facts would soon convince us we had no reason to rejoice in capricious alterations. If, on the contrary, it is allowed to be right, that this country should be governed by the powers which have been mentioned, and that they should judge for themselves what is constitutional, in matters properly belonging to their own jurisdiction, is it not wrong to speak of this right as a trifling thing? Is it not offensive to insinuate, that though the rights of our legislators may be disputed by every man who can move his tongue, or drive his quill, yet the rights of such politicians, and of every individual not in office, ought to be held up

up as sacred, and should be considered as the basis of human liberty?

Sometimes we are told, that corruption and dominion are inseparable; and the inference is, that continued opposition to men in power must be prudent. But it may be replied, whatever corruptions are connected with dominion, they who are factious wish to reign; and those Gentlemen who are most violent against men in office, are commonly most anxious to be officially employed. We may add, whenever opposition is expedient, it should be of that kind which originates from an upright intention, is decently conducted, and as ably supported. If more than this is ever wanting, let those pour out their invectives in prose and verse, of whom better things cannot be expected; let those produce illiberal charges whose consciences no man suspects to be tender; but from every thing which is venal and outrageous in opposition, may they be preserved who profess to fear God and honor the King!

Much

Much has been thrown out to convince us, that every subject should be *eligible* to any office under government; and some say to the highest honors in the State. But surely these are extravagant propositions. If they are not, all *hereditary* distinctions are swept away at once. I am not speaking of the church of Christ; where indeed, hereditary descent is of no avail; but of the world, in which it ever has been of real importance.

Were the levelling principles of some men thoroughly approved, the kingdom of Great Britain would become elective; and every man in it would not only have a possible chance of being King, but would have an equal vote upon every contested election to raise his favorite leader, or his greatest creditor, to the throne.

They who hate hereditary distinctions may reply, What you seem to dread, we desire. Our leading principle is, "*the unity of man,*" by which we mean, "*that men are all of one degree.*" But this reply will not charm those readers who learn from
better

better authority, that there are men of high degree by birth, and likewise of low degree, by being the children of base men. They will rather conclude, “ the people shall be oppressed every one by another, and every one by his neighbour, when the child shall behave himself proudly against the antient, and the base against the honourable.”

But are those advocates for the supposed *equality* of all men sincere? Are they disposed to act upon their own principles where they themselves preside? Have they so much as formed a string of resolutions to abolish all distinctions between masters and servants in their own mansions? When they attempt to answer these questions, it will perhaps, more fully appear, whether their levelling principles are not always embraced on one condition; I mean that they rise into that consequence by the revolutions they wish to effect; which, while the regular course of society continues, and proper order is preserved, they cannot by any artifice obtain.

It

It is idle to talk of “ musty records “ and mouldy parchments” in order to depreciate hereditary claims. Deeds of conveyance however important, and declarations however instructing, must be committed to perishable materials. The BIBLE ITSELF, is not an exception. But are we, on this account, to despise what is conveyed or taught to mankind? The DECLARATION published by the National Assembly of France, which is said to contain, “ the sacred rights of men and “ citizens,” will be as *musty* and *mouldy* as other memorials in some future period. Will its merit fade as its letters decay? or will that instrument, be of less value than while it is of modern date? So it should seem. But why then, are these rights called *sacred*? The National Assembly may be offended by that *term*; and others will not perceive the propriety of such an epithet, who know the aversion of that Assembly to revealed religion; and who recollect that the Gentleman who pays them this compliment is of opinion, that, “ That which may be thought right
“ and

“ and found convenient in one age, may
 “ be thought wrong and found inconve-
 “ nient in another.”

As matters now stand in this country, it is certain, men may incapacitate themselves from holding offices under government by their own fault, as even Lord Bacon did in the reign of James I; and that others may be ineligible to such honor, without the least imputation of moral blame. For, they may not have that property which the law demands; or they may be destitute of that sagacity, which the nature of the office requires.

It is true, the article of property is considered as a grievous bar by many who are ambitious; nor is it less true, that the vain will be uneasy if you suspect them to be deficient in understanding. But after all, who is, and who is not *eligible* to offices under government, and to titles of honor, must not be decided by every individual for himself; but by some person, or by some assembly, of such consequence as may give a sanction to the decision, and afford proper protection to them

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that

that are chosen. But as no person, nor any assembly, can be found whom all parties will ever think *infallible*, or who have any just claim to infallibility, the rules of their proceedings will not be perfect; much less can we suppose, that their decisions will always be impartial. What then? Where there is no remedy, the nature of the case loudly calls for those dispositions which prompt us to make the best of that which is, and to avoid those tempers which may inflame, but cannot remove human imperfections.

Under such trials *real* Christians have the advantage. They are not disposed to envy, or flatter, the great; nor are they too much dejected at the partial proceedings of men in power. They know, that the inquietudes of this life are but for a season; and while that season lasts, they believe every thing is, every moment, under his providence who careth for them; and on whom they judge it is both their privilege and duty to cast all their care.

If they are *called* to serve their country, in any station they are able to support,
(provided

(provided the call is not encumbered with those requisitions which hurt their moral feelings,) they cheerfully comply. If men in authority will not accept of their service, but upon terms which, as Christians, they cannot approve; though they may think themselves treated in a manner that provokes complaint, yet, loving peace as well as truth, they approve of no remedy where the force of sound argument has not effect; but till this operates in their favor, they rejoice that civil business will not be neglected; and sincerely pray it may be so done as to afford general satisfaction.

To preserve this pacific temper, it should be remembered, that no man is bound to speak well of any measure which he believes is injurious; or of any act which he thinks is not to be defended; nor even to be silent, whenever he judges that the publication of his opinions may be of use to society, or of any credit to his own connections. But every *private* man is bound, by divine authority, to submit peaceably to the civil power of that

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country

country in which he resides or lives, in all cases where his submission would leave him in the enjoyment of a good conscience.

If any person is disposed to plead, he cannot in *conscience* submit to some things the state requires, or bear with others which it inflicts; let those words of scripture that affect his moral sensations be fairly quoted; and his own exposition of them be as fairly stated. Having done this, let him hold fast his religious deference to the word of God; not rudely, but with firmness; till he can be convinced that his own application of the words on which his plea is founded are improperly applied. But let him make it manifest he is as upright as he is bold; by adhering to what he believes his indispensable duty under every possible consequence; saying even to rulers, "Whether it is right in the sight of God, to hearken unto men, more than unto God, judge ye."

Conscience, which is now my subject, acknowledges no superior but its own Lord. Wise men therefore, never think
of

of pleading conscience, unless they are fully persuaded their plea rests on those premises which will bear investigation. They know, that Christians must needs be subject to civil Magistrates, as ministers of God; not only for wrath, or for fear of punishment, but also for conscience sake. This being the general ground of their obedience, the exceptions to this rule are more difficult to discern; yet if those exceptions are not clearly distinguished, a wise man is afraid to approach the borders of transgression; because he not only dreads the thought of pleading conscience when that moral power is not properly affected, but is shocked at the notion of his being, under any pretence, a bad example to his neighbours.

Before I quit this theme, it may be proper to remark, that if for conscience sake we must needs be subject, religion and legislation are not so independent of each other, as is now the fashion of some writers to represent. They are indeed distinct; but under every good government they are united. Religion is a
personal.

personal concern, and may exist, nay flourish, where civil government cannot be enjoyed, and where it is horribly abused. But civil government can never answer its own end independent of religion. A man left *alone* on some fertile, or barren Island, may live there in the belief of a future state, and in the fear of God; but if others should come to settle on it, and he and they should unite to form a code of civil law, it would be found necessary to connect the laws of this little State with some religious sanction. Without such assistance, neither rewards nor punishments would secure general obedience.—He knows not the nature of man who presumes that where conscience is unconcerned, civil order may be preserved. For, “ what more savage, wild, “ and cruel than man, if he see himself “ able, either by fraud to over-reach, or “ by power to over-bear, the laws where- “ unto he should be subject? Wherefore “ in so great a boldness to offend, it be- “ hoveth that the world should be held in “ awe, not by a vain surmise, but by a true

“ true apprehension of somewhat which
 “ no man may think himself able to with-
 “ stand. THIS IS THE TRUE POLI-
 “ TIQUE USE OF RELIGION.”

Allow some writers to assert, that in this country civil government may continue in its full operation, without the interference of the Christian institution, and you will find it difficult to refute their plausible pretensions. But if civil government could not be introduced into Pagan countries without the aid of their religion, are we to suppose, that where Idolatry is renounced, Mahomedism rejected, and Deism disowned, that the *full* operation of government needs no direct assistance from Christianity?

But restless adventurers, in all ages, have thought it a fine thing to live without God in the world ; and to erect, were it possible, a kind of government, originating in their own lust, and coinciding with their own corrupted understanding. In France, such folly has blazed out to an uncommon height. The fewel of their flaming system has been long collecting ;

lecting; nor is it difficult to say, from what mines their combustible materials were extracted. It is however presumed, from the apparent violence of their political flames, since they were thoroughly kindled, that every honest Frenchman heartily wishes they may be effectually quenched.

A strange reluctance in some men to retain God in their minds, is of antient date; and certain French philosophers have shewn us, that the same temper suits modern taste. But with all their *skill*, it is said they have met with considerable difficulties in giving the appearance of security to their novel jurisdiction. Among the rest, an *oath*, it seems, is necessary. But to swear by their MAKER, is to confess that legislation and religion, even in such hands, cannot be independent. Had these famous philosophers held a sentiment of some quiet, but erring friends in this country, they might have urged that oaths are unlawful; but being Gentlemen not averse to prophane swearing, they thought it more polite, as well as more politic, to confirm their doubtful importance

importance by an oath. Whether when their *civic oath* is taken they mean to appeal to GOD, or swear only by their own *honor*, I shall not determine; be this as it may, neither by *oaths*, nor by *orations*, will they soon see an end of all strife.

To prepare our minds for something not very promising in practice, we are told at home, " That our Saviour did
 " not intermeddle with the policy of
 " nations ;—for the improvement of this,
 " any more than any other science which
 " might be extremely short and defective,
 " formed no part of his mission, and was
 " rendered beside quite unnecessary, by
 " that energy of mind which, prompted
 " by curiosity, by our passions and our
 " wants, will *ever* be abundantly suffi-
 " cient to perpetuate and refine every
 " civil or human institution." If such
 be the energy of the human mind under
 the influence of curiosity, passion and
 want, how are we to account for the long
 continued defects of antient governments,
 or for those loud complaints which have

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been

been heard against recent regulations ?
 “ Able and deep philosophers, who pur-
 “ sued their enquiries with a close and
 “ accurate investigation, who formed
 “ their principles and ideas of govern-
 “ ment from history and experience, and
 “ who reasoned upon them with a cir-
 “ cumstantial precision and cautious cir-
 “ cumpection,” saw no such constant,
 or complete security, in human energy as
 is now pretended.

But men who fancy they “ have found
 “ a more easy and certain road to truth,”
 say, “ We may rest assured, the political
 “ affairs of Nations are suffered to remain
 “ in their antient channels, and to be
 “ conducted as occasions may arise, by
 “ Christians, or by others without dis-
 “ tinction.” He must be very fond of
 assurance who reposes on this assertion.
 In those occasions which have arisen, or
 have been sought, in America and France,
 are we to be told that modern managers
 have suffered the affairs of those States to
 remain in their “ antient channels ?” But
 if the whole system of civil government, is

“ *no more* than a provision of human “ *skill*,” its channels, whether they are strait or crooked, deep or shallow, may, it seems, retain their antient appellations. But was the Jewish THEOCRACY nothing more than a provision of human skill? They who lived under it had very different apprehensions. They said, “ The Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king, he will save us.” Now, we all know, that this form of civil government was not suffered to continue; but if instead of that Divine Legation, we are now to be ruled by the private conceits of private philosophers, “ as occasions may arise,” what man of sedate reflection can do less than lament the miserable change?

By “ antient channels” perhaps, neither patriarchal government, nor the law of Moses, are alluded to by this writer; but channels, compared with those, which are but of recent date. Be it so; has he any right to make the turbid streams of Pagan instruction fouler than they really are? Did Cicero assert that

legislation originated in *human wit*? Were the greatest legislators of Greece and Rome of this opinion? So far from it, that the “use of religion to the State” was seen by the learned, and felt by “all men of every age and nation. The “*antient* world particularly, was so “firmly convinced of this truth, that “their greatest secret in the *sublime* art “of legislation consisted in this; how “religion might be best applied to the “service of society:” and they have assured us, “that it is impossible to fix “the true principles of POLICY without “those of RELIGION.”—Must we then, wearied with wisdom, renounce her dictates, and sink at last, under the Christian institution, into the sophisticated regions of folly!

Let us turn from such rash reformers, to sounder maxims and to better guides.

The apostles lived in an age which demanded more prudence and exposed them to much greater trials, than is commonly supposed. Yet by the faith, fortitude and patience of those apostles, who

who have taught us to pray for Kings, and for all that are in authority; who have assured us, that in the last days perilous times shall come; who have foretold what would in those days create disturbance; who have warned us against being carried away with every wind of doctrine, even when doctors speak great swelling words of vanity; and who have also exhorted us to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey Magistrates, and to be ready to every good work: by such wise and holy DEFENDERS of the FAITH, Christianity gained admission into every State whither it was sent; and soon rose into public notice, and popular esteem: commanding pity for its suffering advocates; exciting admiration; and last of all, happily pervading every political community where it was embraced.

If the forms of Pagan government were suffered to continue, its spirit was changed, in proportion as Christianity prevailed. She prescribes such duties to
 them

them who govern, and to those who are governed, that, without changing antient and established institutions, she adds that kind of perfection to each, which enables it to reach its true end. With her, there is neither tyranny nor anarchy; which are the two extremes of civil dominion.

But is not Christianity the same now, as in the days of her youth? Yes, she is. Neither age nor opposition, flattery nor scorn, have altered her features, or changed her nature. Were but her *professed* friends as wise and cautious, as humble and spiritually minded, as those who were endued with power from on high; no State on earth would have the least reason to be alarmed at their principles, or to be offended at their behaviour: and what could such men have to fear in Great Britain, from the civil power? If by any unexpected revolution, they were to find themselves the objects of public resentment, they would overcome evil with good; and be joyful under unmerited abuse. Such things have been; and where that wisdom which is from
above,

above, is richly enjoyed, such excellence will again appear in its proper season.

How distant some professors of Christianity have been, and are, from the spirit and steps of such illustrious men, they will not suffer to be a secret. They glory in being very different from their betters; and account their own folly—wisdom. They defend their departure from the soundest maxims of the primitive church, by saying, “the times are altered.” We admit they are; but we contend, they are not altered for the better by unbelievers; nor by those notions which too many are anxious to propagate, and eager to defend.

One of our opponents asserts, very fairly, “Before any thing can be reasoned upon to a conclusion, certain facts, principles, or data, to reason from, must be established, admitted, or denied.” What then, of this kind, has he *established* to support his own scheme? Nothing. He appeals to antiquity, and says, “If we proceed on, we shall at last come out right; we shall come to
“ the

“ the time when man came from the
 “ hands of his maker.” Having travelled
 so far back in search of something to be
 “ reasoned upon to a conclusion,” he
 asks, “ What was he then ?” and answers,
 “ Man. Man was his high and only
 “ title; and a higher,” adds he, “ can-
 “ not be given him.” We are now at
 the head of the Nile. Nor could a late
 traveller be more pleased when, without
 a figure, he reached the end of his ro-
 mantic journey, than this Gentleman.
 Upon this occasion he thus exclaims :
 “ We are now got at the origin of man,
 “ and at the origin of his rights.—Here
 “ our enquiries find a resting place, and
 “ our reason finds a home.”

They who can rest upon such prin-
 ciples, or argue from such *data*, must
 expect to be disturbed. When God made
 man, he made him *upright*. Are we in
 that condition ? He placed him in *para-*
dise. Are we in such a situation ? When
 Adam sinned, and came short of the
 glory of God, he fell from a public into
 a private state ; and from innocence, into
 condemnation.

condemnation. Is his case and ours exactly similar? When he was ejected from his blest abode, with his loss of Eden, every other right was lost that rested on his good behaviour. Man therefore, as a fallen creature, has no right to any thing without the second Adam; the Lord from heaven. By his Mediation, our fallen father obtained mercy; though sent forth from the garden of Eden to till the ground from whence he was taken; and doomed, in the sweat of his face, to eat his bread. Are we, by nature, in any better situation? Have we any rights independent of Jesus Christ? Or have we any reason to lament that our rights should be connected with the second Adam, rather than with the first?

But this Gentleman overlooking the FALL of MAN, as a doubtful, or as a trifling circumstance, reasons from cases, not at all in point, to conclusions as ridiculous, as they are destitute of any proper foundation. He does more; for his reasonings are inconsistent with his *own* leading principle. "Those," says he,
 F "who

“ who have quitted the world, and those
 “ who are not yet arrived at it, are as
 “ remote from each other, as the utmost
 “ stretch of mortal imagination can con-
 “ ceive.” Is this the man, who travels
 into the remotest antiquity for *data* to
 reason from? Is this he, who asks,
 “ Why then not trace the rights of man
 “ to the creation of man?”

So much, at present, for his wit. Let
 us next glance at his devotion. He prays,
 that his American Patron, “ may enjoy
 “ the happiness of seeing the New World
 “ regenerate the Old.” What wild no-
 tions must this flippant Author have of
 regeneration! But who can be surpris’d
 at this? since so many preachers are dis-
 posed to treat the consequences of our fall
 with derision; and to give their hearers
 ample occasion to conclude, they are
 naturally so good, or by education so re-
 formed, as not to need superior renova-
 tion.

In vain do these self-sufficient teachers
 read, “ that which is born of flesh is flesh.”
 In vain do they read, that the best of
 men

men were " by nature, the children of " wrath, even as others." The very term *regeneration*, is offensive to them, unless you will allow, that one man, or one part of man, or one part of the world, may regenerate another. Then indeed, it becomes a favourite expression; they introduce it without a blush, and repeat it with delight.

Those Gentlemen who do not admire " an eager attachment to the doctrines of " grace," are in raptures at the French revolution. By that, if we may believe them, " The empire of darkness and of " despotism, has been smitten with a " stroke which has sounded through the " universe." But this mighty stroke, it seems, has not yet been heard in *HEAVEN; and on EARTH, it has perhaps, produced no better effects, than to make the lovers

* " A Discourse on occasion of the death of " Dr. P. delivered at Hackney, Sunday, May 1, " 1791," is here alluded to; and, if the reader looks at the 27th and 28th pages of that Discourse, he will perhaps, be of opinion the allusion is not impertinent.

of order, and of sound policy, more vigilant and cautious, in their respective departments. How far these good effects may be connected with beneficial consequences to this, or to any other kingdom, posterity must judge.

If the unjustifiable riots at Birmingham are not mentioned with becoming disgust, the aggressor is said to be destitute of humanity. But if the still more illegal riots at Paris are commemorated with festivity, FREEDOM, O highly injured Name! THOU, as if thou wert another *Moloch*, art supposed to sanctify such mischief, and to make humane such extravagant proceedings.

Yet still the boast is, that we live in an age of uncommon erudition; that our light is not only come, but widely diffused amongst us; so that almost all ranks of men are much more illuminated than in former times. The same pretence, and to serve the same purpose too, was played off before Great Britain was distinguished among the nations. They who believe this, are not easily ensnared by such gross adulation.

adulation. What others may have observed of the present period, is not for me to say; but, in my own opinion, upon the important subjects of civil government, and revealed religion, there are yet not a few who seem to be “ full of “ tongue and weak of brain.”

It is however, cheerfully admitted, that on the first of these subjects, we have men as intelligent, and on the other, men as judicious, as ever lived in this Island. But are we to suppose, that our Senators and Magistrates, are left alone in darkness; without capacity, and without integrity? Are we to imagine, that those only are wise, who “ have *dared* to “ assume the bold and natural port of “ free men?” Must we, of necessity conclude, that they who, by their own confession, attempt “ bold innovations “ and maintain sentiments *very* different “ from those which are generally held,” are of all men the most excellent? We deny the obligation; and are of opinion, it is more probable, that “ the fervent “ [or illiberal] reproachers of things established

“ established by public authority, are
 “ always confident and bold men: and
 “ that their confidence, for the most
 “ part, riseth from too much credit given
 “ to their own wits; for which cause
 “ they are seldom free from error.”

But if our Senators, Judges, and other Gentlemen in office, have mental powers which keep pace with common people; if with all their learning, property, and dignity, they care as much for this country as those who are not averse to disturbance; let us take care how we read what such writers publish; and how we listen to the artful addresses of those who have but little to lose and almost every thing to seek.—Men who have no hope of becoming consequential, but by throwing individuals into distress, or their country into confusion, are guides, which neither experience nor common sense, will ever induce us to follow. But suppose, some well meaning men should endeavour to lead us into forbidden paths; (which is no uncommon case,) it is but a poor recompence, when we feel the consequence

quence of complying with their counsel, to hear them say, We were alas! deceived.

In all that has been here said on civil government, it may be observed, that the *ecclesiastical* Polity of the Church of England, is neither censured nor applauded. Why should it? Since, as to the religious sentiments of those who are discontented with the management of civil business, nothing occurs which will make a prudent man bear hard on any distinct denomination. For, it is evident, let the number of the discontented be what it may, there are as many in the Church of England as in any other situation. This is no reproach to the National Establishment; since whatever a man's religious profession may be, if he has only a form of godliness, and not the power thereof, why should we wonder that impiety and impatience should dwell in the same breast?

That there are men destitute of godliness, and men who fear God, both in the Church of England, and amongst Dissenters, must be admitted. Yet a learned

Gentleman

Gentleman at Oxford, has published such a Letter, that were he to be credited, to dissent and to rebel, would be considered as synonymous expressions.

From the spirit of this Letter, one would conclude, that the writer designed, not only to “awaken resentment against
“Dissenters at large;” but to call them into Court without the least distinction. “Is it candid, is it equitable, to advance
“charges against a *whole* body, without
“bringing forward a *single* act of that
“body, by which those charges may be
“supported?”

This angry Gentleman boasts, in the Public Advertiser, that the champions of the Dissenters, “have been refuted without answer.” Is he not himself, in the same predicament? Most people who have read in Woodfall’s Register, the sensible reply which has been made to his undistinguishing charges, seem to be of that opinion. But it gives me pleasure to add, that I have lately seen two Letters written by the same Author, which are much better worth my notice. Yet even

even in these, though written to a celebrated Member of Parliament, there are charges against Protestant Dissenters, which appear to have been drawn up in the dark; and which, it is hoped, upon the light that has been thrown out, this Author will publicly recant. Should he however shut his eyes against that instruction which has been imparted by a Dissenter, he need not to be told who has long since said, "There will come a time
 " when three words uttered with charity
 " and meekness, shall receive a far more
 " blessed reward, than three thousand
 " volumes written with disdainful sharp-
 " ness of wit." The memory of that Clergyman who said this, I revere; though he wrote, in my opinion, the best defence that was ever written against Dissenters. I am not converted by his arguments; but I endeavour to profit by his learned labours: nor would it disgrace modern Collegians to be as well informed, as cautious, and as fair, on controversial subjects, as that judicious writer.*

* The Rev. RICHARD HOOKER.

It is very true, that Dissenters “ dissent “ among themselves.” Are not churchmen as much divided; both on political, and on theological subjects? But it is not true, that Dissenters “ dissent from “ the Church AND Constitution of England;” much less in the manner, or on the motive, which has been so frequently asserted: nor is there any appearance of truth in saying, they are united to each other *only* by that dissent. Had the Church of England never existed, there might have been congregational churches in Britain, holding and teaching, what is now held and taught in such religious societies. Christianity was embraced by Britons, as in other Pagan States, not only without the assistance, but under the displeasure of the civil Power: consequently, by individuals who judged for themselves; most of them at first, of the lower orders of society. Afterwards, Establishments were formed, and highly esteemed; but exceptions to this fact are incontestable, and may ever be expected.

What

What end can it answer to misrepresent a people that are able to reply for themselves; and who, in matters of conscience, will not be forbid? But this Author is the more to be blamed for his want of temper, since he enjoys so much leisure, and is treated with so much respect. His own words are, “ I have been emboldened “ to take up the pen of the politician, “ and have availed myself of the indulgence of this learned University, to “ which I am under a particular engagement, by suspending, for a short time, “ that of the theologist.” Surely the Church is thought to be in danger, when the first University in the Kingdom grants a suspension to one of her obedient sons, that he may take up the pen of the politician!

How different is the situation of this Author from mine! I am not emboldened by any man; have not availed myself of the least indulgence; nor suspended, even for a short time, my theological engagements; but am obliged to write, if I write at all, while I am discharging those duties

which he perhaps, would think a burden. Yet I should be hurt to discover so much inattention to any subject, it was my design to controvert, as this indulged Divine has manifested in contending with Protestant Dissenters.—But enough has been said, previous to this publication, to shew, that there are Dissenters in Great-Britain to a very large amount, as well affected to government, as loyal and peaceable in their behaviour, as any of their fellow subjects—Of this number, if he knows himself, is the Author of this Review.

HAVING thus given my thoughts on the important subject of civil government, though I make no apology for what is written, it may not be improper to say what has led me to publish these opinions.

The matter stands thus: The sentiments contained in this Review, I have held, propagated and defended, for more than
than

than thirty years. Of late, opinions very different from these have been more circulated than sober men could wish: with what effect abroad, and with what suspicions at home, is pretty well known. I read, as may be observed, some of those seducing pamphlets which different authors have been emboldened to write: but read them as far from being terrified at the seeming strength of their arguments, as from believing that they who wrote them were pursuing the best intentions. Afterwards, I resolved to try whether I could detect the real weakness of their leading principles, and expose the hurtful tendency of some of their favorite maxims. This, though unsolicited, appeared to be a duty that I owed to my native country: the peace of which, it would give me pleasure to promote.

That peace is an object worthy of every man's attention. He that can do but little towards it, should not leave that little undone. Every prudent effort to such an end is of some importance; and I am now persuaded, that if Church and
 Dissenting

Dissenting ministers could enjoy the full extent of Christian friendship, the peace of their people would be more abundant. It seems therefore, to be no imprudent undertaking to mention some of those things which, if mutually regarded, might considerably prevent future contention.

I am the more encouraged to do this by what has been done already. For a respectable Clergyman in his Letters to the Bishop of London, has laid such a foundation for this good work, that little more is wanting than to build upon it.

He supposes that sensible men should make those concessions, and endeavour to promote that reform in their *own* Church that the nature of its Constitution will admit. His words are, " It is laudable
 " and ingenuous in our own Clergy, when
 " occasions offer, to point out defects,
 " and to suggest amendments in our
 " Establishment; it is honourable with
 " respect to the church herself, which
 " allows this liberty to her members.
 " But such writings," he thinks, " should
 " preserve that decorum and moderation;
 " which

" which is consistent with the relation
 " the authors of them bear to the Church,
 " of which they treat." He adds, " Satire
 " and invective against her will do no
 " credit either to the good sense or good
 " temper of a Writer of any denomina-
 " tion; but must come with peculiar
 " impropriety from those, who have pro-
 " mised allegiance to her laws, and who
 " subsist by her appointments."

Have we, on our side, no defects to
 point out; no amendments to suggest?
 Are we not as much at liberty to do this
 in our connections, as Clergymen in
 theirs? Would not the decent use of
 such freedom, as occasions offer, be as
 laudable and ingenuous in *us*, as in *them*?
 Certainly it would. Nor let us imagine
 that such fair dealing will ever excite sus-
 picion, in sensible and candid minds, that
 we are not sufficiently attached to what
 has been often called, the Dissenting
 Interest.

The same Author seems to be of opi-
 nion, that another step necessary to the
 full enjoyment of that friendship it would
 be

be our mutual honor to promote, is a respectful treatment of each other in all things which Church-men and Dissenters reciprocally approve. He observes, " That
 " people should be of one mind in matters
 " of religion, either with respect to the
 " substantial part of it, or the form in
 " which it is to be administered, a very
 " moderate knowledge of human nature
 " will teach us never to expect; but" adds he, " that notwithstanding these
 " differences men should treat each other
 " without bitterness, with moderation and
 " candor, is an expectation, which in
 " these times, I should have thought not
 " quite unreasonable."

Of real moderation and candor he has given us this pleasing example. " Far
 " be it from me, my Lord, to detract
 " from the merit of our Dissenting Bre-
 " thren for their joint labours with us in
 " the common cause of Christianity. On
 " the contrary, I have always considered
 " them as Friends and Associates engaged
 " in the same work; I have always seen
 " with pleasure our agreement on the
 " great

" great truths and duties of Religion; and
 " think it for the most part a recom-
 " mendation both of their performances
 " and ours, where the differences sub-
 " sisting between us are not marked;
 " when the party, from whom they come,
 " cannot be distinguished. In such per-
 " formances," this Author says, " the
 " merit of our Dissenters will always be
 " acknowledged by every impartial judge
 " of Learning, by every friend of Chris-
 " tianity; in such we shall both of us
 " do real service to mankind, and acquire
 " lasting reputation; while Posterity will
 " despise and forget most of the paltry
 " Controversies with which our differences
 " are continued and fomented."

Though this language is very respect-
 ful, it would be easy to produce from
 judicious and dignified Church-men,
 much more to the same purpose. But
 one thing adds a lustre to this Gentleman's
 candor; it was indulged when he felt
 himself a little hurt at an imprudent
 pamphlet which had been lately pub-
 lished by an ingenious, but intemperate

H

Dissenter.

Dissenter.—Such a victory over his own feelings is worthy our imitation.

Once more; the Author* who takes the lead in these pacific remarks, is of opinion, that “ the justice and utility of
 “ Toleration is now as much acknow-
 “ ledged by all reasonable well-informed
 “ men, as any maxim respecting Public
 “ Religion and Civil Government.” But though he supposes Toleration to be
 “ complete in fact,” he does not allow it is “ complete by Law.” To be sure it is not; but why is this delayed; especially on the head of penal statutes? There are, I believe, only few remaining against Protestant Dissenters. Yet why should there be any act upon the Statute Book unrepealed, which the worst of men might put in force to our wounding and hurt, if they were not over-awed by the liberal temper of our present legislators? This is grievous to men well affected to government; and those who are not, take

* The Rev. JOHN STURGES, LL. D. Chancellor of the Diocese of Winchester, and Chaplain in Ordinary to His Majesty.

occasion

occasion from what is yet wanting, to aggravate the fact, and to excite confusion.

Were I a *Church-man*, I should think it my honor unsolicited to act for those that feel upon this subject: and though I am *not*, I have no wish that the Church in which I was *born*, should disgrace herself by attempting to relieve them who withdraw from her jurisdiction. But believing it would add to her reputation and peace, I wish, that by her mediation, the State may be inclined to grant to *all* Dissenters, every thing that is equitable, in a manner the most explicit, and in a temper the most humane.

What will be thought of this Review, and of these additional remarks, I am neither careless to understand, nor anxious to learn. If insults are to be my reward, they will be despised. If correction be my lot, that may do me good. If men of sense and piety should approve of my labor, their esteem will give me pleasure.

APPENDIX.

Being informed, that what is said in *two* of the preceding pages may be liable to misconstruction, to prevent this, I thought it right to add a few words by way of explanation.

It was not my design in the 7th page, to insinuate there is any person superior to the law, or absolutely out of its reach. No, when what *is* law is undisputed, IT is “ every where supreme and governs “ all.” “ The king is governed and “ protected by the law, so far as, in his “ exalted situation, it can concern him: “ therefore the king is *free*. The nobles “ are governed and protected by the law: “ therefore the nobles are *free*. Every “ subject of Great-Britain, in his political station and occupation, is governed “ and protected by the law: therefore “ every Briton is *free*.”

This I believe: but though I am persuaded of the fact, and think that this

is the freedom which good sense admires and religion approves, it does not follow, in every important case that occurs, that what *is* law will admit of no dispute; or that I am bound to believe all that is *called* law is friendly to freedom. Yet I am fully convinced, that a revision of our laws should never be left to the caprice of *private* opinions.

If any person should surmise on his reading the 41st page, that I think "Dominion is founded in Grace," he will do it without foundation. Nothing like this, in the common sense of those words, ever was my opinion. That *bad* men have had a right to rule, and may again be *justly* invested with sovereign power, I cannot doubt; yet that *any* man *can* govern, without him who "lighteth every man that cometh into the world," and by whom "kings reign, and princes decree justice," I do not believe. The heathen is given for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. He girds them that know him not; and those who
know

know him confess, he is "KING of kings, and LORD of lords." But to say, that Dominion is founded in that grace which any person has received, and to say, that without the Mediation of the *second* Adam, the blessings of civil government would not have been granted to the children of the *first*, are very different propositions.

A Gentleman, who thinks at random upon this subject, asserts, the several sources from which governments have arisen, and on which they have been founded, may be all comprehended under three heads: "First, Superstition. Secondly, Power. Thirdly, The common interest of society, and the common rights of man." From which he concludes, "The first was a government of priestcraft, the second of conquerors, and the third of reason."

Now, this Gentleman, is either speaking of governments above the moon, or in it, or below it. If of the latter, why are we not told, *where* and *when* his first, second, and third governments actually existed?

existed? Because he knew, that had he descended from general assertion to particular description, we might chance to be as well acquainted with those governments as himself; and if so, he had just reason to fear the painful consequence.

To prevent detection he multiplies, as usual, general assertions, and talks at such a rate of artful men and oracles, and back stairs in European courts; of a race of Conquerors, the idols, it seems, they have made, united, and persuaded the multitude to worship; of recent reformers, who say this country has not yet regenerated itself, and is therefore without a Constitution; he talks at such a rate of these things, and of what he supposes to be the *only* mode in which governments have a right to arise, and of the *only* principle on which they have a right to exist; that it may be feared he is hurt by his own extravagance. May he live to be sober, and worthy of more respectful attention!



ERRATA.

P. 12, l. 21, *add with after things.*

P. 51, l. 16, *for Univerfity read University.*

✶ A Gentleman has observed, that “ Dr. T. does not
“ say, the University *granted him* a suspension—the
“ suspension seems to be *his own act*.” If so, there
can be no reflection on that LEARNED BODY for its
supposed indulgence to Dr. T.

✶ * This Review, with every other Publication of the
same Author, not out of print, are sold by JOHN
MARTIN, Junior, No. 13, Windmill-Street,
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various languages, on reasonable terms.

